



Hector De La Torre

News Release

Assembly Member 50th District

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De La Torre Legislation Generates Permanent Funding to Attract Doctors to Low-Income and Rural Communities

Sacramento, Calif. – In an effort to secure the stability of the Steven M. Thompson Physician Corps Loan Repayment Program, Assemblymember Hector De La Torre (D-South Gate) is promoting Assembly Bill 2439 to assist doctors who want to practice medicine in inner-city and rural communities. The bill received a vote of 42-27 when it passed the Assembly Floor today.

AB 2439 converts the current \$50 voluntary donation for the Steven M. Thompson Physician Corps Loan Repayment Program (Thompson Program) to a mandatory fee. Specifically, this bill will require the Medical Board of California to assess a \$50 fee for the Thompson Program in addition to the initial \$805 license and license renewal fees paid by physicians and surgeons.

The program provides up to \$105,000 in loan reimbursements for physicians who practice medicine in an underserved community for a minimum of three years. Currently, the program is largely dependent on the \$50 voluntary contribution that physicians and surgeons may pay when they apply for or renew their licenses.

"In order to help young doctors to provide services in underserved communities, this bill will require that a \$50 contribution be made mandatory for physicians and surgeons," said Assemblymember De La Torre. "This bill could result in over \$3.2 million per year to fund the Thompson Program. Most importantly, doctors can help their colleagues by creating a permanent funding source that will incentivize some physicians to serve in underserved areas statewide."

Background

The Thompson Physician Corps Loan Repayment Program was created to provide student loan assistance to physicians and surgeons who agree to work in underserved areas, including rural and inner city communities. Since its inception in 2003, participating physicians have served in communities including: Los Angeles, Oakland, San Bernardino, Sonoma, Woodland, San Diego, San Francisco, and Humboldt.

According to information provided by the Medical Board of California, the Thompson Program last year collected \$55,000. Approximately 1,100 physicians and surgeons contributed to the program designed to encourage physicians to work in underserved areas. This is compared to the over 63,000 physicians who renewed or received a new license to practice in California in 2006-07.

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